

BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK RIM ROAD
(Bryce Canyon National Park
Main Entrance Road)
State Highway 63
Tropic vicinity
Garfield County
Utah

HAER No. UT-71

HAER
UTAH
9-TROP. V,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: Bryce Canyon National Park, State Highway 63, beginning 2.6 miles South of intersection with State Highway 12 (north park boundary), running approximately 18.4 miles to terminus at Rainbow Point, Tropic Vicinity, Garfield County, Utah

USGS Quad: Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah
beginning at UTM: 12/397520/4168040
terminating at UTM: 12/390390/4148100

Date of Construction: Main Entrance Road south from State Highway 12 to the Bryce Canyon Lodge was constructed from 1923-27. The road was extended further south to terminus at Rainbow Point (including adjoining spur roads) from 1930-35.

Type of Structure: Vehicular road

Use: Vehicular access to scenic vistas, visitor lodging, services, and utility roads within Bryce Canyon National Park.

Designer/Engineer: United States Forest Service, 1923-27
Bureau of Public Roads, 1930-35

Fabricator/
Builder: north entrance road: unknown
sector 1-A and 1-B: Union Construction Co.
sector 1-B2: W.W. Clyde and Company
Reynolds-Ely Construction Co.

Owner: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

Significance: Development of the Bryce Canyon National Park Rim Road was promoted in part by the Union Pacific Railroad as a component in their plan combining train and automobile travel to create a "tourist loop" between Cedar City, Zion National Park, Cedar Breaks National Monument, Bryce Canyon, and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. The road was created under guidelines developed cooperatively between the National Park Service and the Bureau of

Project
Information:

Public Roads in the 1920s and 1930s. The guidelines dictated aesthetic and practical standards for the design and construction of the roadway in an attempt to mitigate any negative impact on the natural features of the region.

Documentation of the Bryce Canyon National Park Rim Road is part of the National Park Service Roads and Bridges Project, conducted during summer 1993 under the co-sponsorship of HABS/HAER and the National Park Service Roads and Bridges Recording Project.

Christine L. Madrid, HAER Historian, 1993

Located near the southern boundary of Utah, Bryce Canyon National Park is fairly isolated, accessible only from State Highway 12 between the town of Tropic and U.S. Highway 89. The 56.2-square mile tract of land enclosed by the park boundaries is long and relatively thin, bordered by the Dixie National Forest on nearly all sides. Within the park, 61 miles of foot trails and 35 miles of paved road allow the visitor access to roughly the entire area. The Rim Road is the principal roadway, loosely following the eastern rim of the Paunsaugunt Plateau, below which lies the Bryce Amphitheater, the primary attraction of the park. Bryce is actually a series of 14 large amphitheaters which contain remarkable multi-colored rock formations of both intricately delicate and exceedingly massive proportions. Minerals in the rock oxidize when exposed by erosion or degeneration of the surface, creating red, yellow and white variations over the entire amphitheater. The effect is astonishing. Bordering the rim of the amphitheater are forests and meadows, visitor accommodations and National Park Service facilities. The Rim Road travels near each of these areas, rising more than 1000 feet (300 meters) in elevation from the northern park boundary to its terminus at Rainbow Point, approximately 18.4 miles from its origin. More than a dozen viewpoints along the route offer spectacular overlooks of the canyon and surrounding country.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first known road leading to the amphitheater area was developed by Ebenezer Bryce between 1875 and 1880. Bryce and his wife briefly settled in the Paria Valley, near the present town of Tropic, for health reasons. He began the construction of an unpaved road running from his farm towards the eastern edge of the plateau in order to remove timber and firewood from the nearby forests. The road was utilized by other residents of the area who eventually referred to the natural amphitheater, where the road terminated, as "Bryce's Canyon."

"Bryce's Canyon" remained relatively unknown as a landmark until the summer of 1915, when J. W. Humphrey, U.S. Forest Service Supervisor for the Powell National Forest (previously headquartered in Panguitch, Utah; now divided and renamed), visited the eastern rim of the Paunsaugunt Plateau on the advice of Elias Smith, a Forest Service Ranger. Amazed by the beauty of the amphitheater, Humphrey immediately began "to plan. . . how this attraction could be made accessible to the public."¹ Humphrey obtained an appropriation of \$50 from the Forest Service

¹J. S. Humphrey, "Notes, Comments, and Letters," taped at Bryce Canyon, September 1959 (Bryce Canyon History File), quoted in Nicholas Scrattish, *Historic Resource Study: Bryce Canyon National Park* (Denver, CO: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, Branch of Historic Preservation, 1985), 15.

the next year for clearing an unpaved access road through "Daves Hollow," a dry wash running past the forest service ranger station and ending near the rim. Local residents completed the labor and the Forest Service provided any materials needed to construct crude bridges for access. By the end of 1916, the dry-weather road allowed vehicles to travel almost four miles from the Daves Hollow Ranger Station to the plateau rim close to the present site of the Bryce Canyon Lodge. This rough roadway was eventually abandoned in favor of a new, more accessible route into the park and, by 1939, was considered no more than a "good pack trail."²

Humphrey actively promoted the wonders of Bryce Canyon, persuading others to visit and ensuring the inevitable development of the region. In 1918, Bryce Canyon was publicized by Oliver J. Grimes, photographer for the widely read *Salt Lake Tribune*. Encouraged to visit the canyon by C. B. Hawley and F. C. Schramm, two directors of the Utah State Automobile Association, Grimes completed a full page article for the Sunday Magazine Section of the *Tribune* dated August 25 and titled "Utah's New Wonderland." Along with many illustrations, the article furnished complete directions from Panguitch (on U.S. Highway 89) to the rim of the plateau, making it clear that the area was open to automobile traffic.³

Although local residents had been stopping by the scenic amphitheater ever since the Daves Hollow access road was completed, visitor accommodations at Bryce were essentially non-existent until 1920, when Reuben Carlson and Clara Syrett erected the first permanent guest lodging in the what is now the park. The Syretts began providing informal services to tourists in 1916, preparing meals and setting up beds near the rim. As the amount of visitors increased, arriving primarily by automobile, the couple completed a small, modest tourist complex at the end of the Daves Hollow road. The 30' x 71' lodge was constructed of sawed logs and included a dining room with fireplace, a kitchen and a few bedrooms. Around the lodge, named "Tourist's Rest," were a number of unassuming cabins and an open-air dance platform for entertainment.⁴

As facilities at Bryce Canyon improved and more people arrived at

²U.S. Geological Survey, *Topographic Map, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1939).

³Scrattish, 18.

⁴*Ibid.*, 22.

the Syrett's lodge, small-scale entrepreneurs began to offer automobile tours to the region from nearby railheads. The most successful were the Parry brothers of Cedar City, who offered vehicular tour packages as the Zion National Park Company. The itinerary featured an 8-day circuit tour including Bryce Canyon, Cedar Breaks, Zion and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon for \$140 per person.⁵ The drive between the parks was by no means pleasurable. Road quality in southern Utah and northern Arizona during this time was questionable. Most routes were only primitively developed and offered little more than bone-jarring rough rides along gravel or dirt surfaces through the hot, forlorn desert country.

Formal recognition of Bryce Canyon was achieved 8 June 1923, when Bryce Canyon National Monument was created by a Presidential proclamation signed by Warren G. Harding. The new monument was provisionally placed under the administration of the U.S. Forest Service, and remained under their jurisdiction until 1928. After acquiring supervision of Bryce Canyon, the Forest Service initiated planning and construction of a new entrance road which would be easily accessible and lead visitors into the park at least as far as the Syrett's lodge and continuing on towards other scenic areas. The roadway was not completely finished until 1933. (For more detail, see "History of the Structure" and "Description" on following pages.)

Recognizing the tourist-related economic potential of the region, the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) initiated an aggressive campaign to control the routes between the major scenic attractions of the area even before government action on the various parks and monuments was finalized. Carl R. Gray, President of the UPRR, ultimately wished to complete an overall scheme, similar to one already established at Yosemite, in which visitors were transported to the region by train, loaded into company-owned automobiles, and whisked away on a circuitous tour featuring the picturesque landscapes of Utah and Arizona. The tour would naturally include meals and lodging at establishments run by the corporation. The UPRR created a subsidiary, the Utah Parks Company (UPC), to run the automobile tours and concessions in the parks. The creation of a modern highway infrastructure between the parks and monuments was integral to the railroad's plan.

By the 1920s, the UPRR had gained sole rights to transport rail passengers from Salt Lake City, Utah's capital, to Marysville, approximately 175 miles south, on existing rail lines of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. A rail spur through Lund, Utah, into Cedar City, the new hub of the UPRR's proposed

⁵Ibid., 31.

development, was constructed. The spur was promoted as multi-functional, serving not only tourists but also mining and agricultural interests. The spur was completed by 27 June 1923, that date marked by the arrival of President Warren G. Harding into Cedar City on the first scheduled train between the two towns.⁶ By this time, a large hotel and depot had been completed by the UPRR as part of a proposed complex containing other service structures. As the UPRR's travel scheme began to develop into reality, plans for hotels, cafeterias, and other tourist accommodations in Zion, Bryce Canyon, Cedar Breaks, and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon commenced.

As late as 1922, no adequate connecting roads existed between Zion and Bryce Canyon. Completion and improvement of the roads between the major stopping points of the new scenic tour were essential to the Union Pacific's planned automobile excursions. Dirt and gravel roads were insufficient for heavy traffic, as both types of surfaces were prone to failure under the weight of numerous vehicles and required continual maintenance. Although the railroad clearly stated that it did not intend to invest directly in the planning or completion of such roads, it did work to push construction by the State of Utah, the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service.

The UPRR devised numerous tactics in order to see their goals accomplished. A system of already established primitive routes between towns was selected and prioritized. Each was promoted in turn by the UPRR with the completion of a tourist loop as the final intent. Financing for construction was left to the state and federal government. According to provisions of the 1921 Federal Highway Act, the federal government would subsidize construction costs for 7 percent of the total road mileage in each state. In Utah, 1600 miles of road would be eligible under this plan. The state would pay 24 percent of the total cost, along with engineering expenses prior to construction; the remainder would be provided by the federal government. As the total projected cost of \$1,000,000 was not immediately available, development proceeded piecemeal as appropriations became available.⁷

The UPC also worked diligently during this time to gain control of concessions in Bryce Canyon and Zion. Shortly after the monument was established in 1923 and after lengthy negotiations, the Syretts sold their visitors complex on the rim to the Utah Parks Company for \$10,000. The Syretts continued to serve

⁶Scrattish, 41.

⁷Ibid., 65.

tourists to Bryce Canyon, constructing a new lodge outside of the current park boundaries named "Ruby's Inn." (A greatly expanded and modernized version of the inn still exists today; it is still run by the Syeretts who operate it as a Best Western franchise.) The UPC also managed to purchase authority over the Zion National Park Company by 1924, contracting with the Parry brothers to continue automobile tours through the region under the supervision of the UPC.

By the start of the 1925 summer season, the UPC had begun to develop a number of tourist accommodations at Bryce Canyon, including a large, new rustic-style lodge designed by Gilbert Stanley Underwood. The architect had also been selected to complete other structures for the UPC within the parks, including a similar lodge at Zion. Numerous cabins, a recreation hall, and service buildings were later constructed near the finished lodge, which was located about 700' from the rim of the amphitheater. With approval from the Utah Public Utilities Commission, the UPC also began tours through the region as planned, utilizing "limousines" or touring buses. Forty buses were put into operation, including eight "White 53's" with Scott bodies, capable of carrying ten passengers each. The fleet was later expanded to include five additional White "65's," each of which had the capacity to carry thirteen passengers. White touring cars were known for their durability and reliable operation and had been used previously at Yellowstone National Park.⁸

On 15 September 1928, under Congressional authority, Bryce Canyon National Monument became Bryce Canyon National Park. Jurisdiction over Bryce was removed from the U.S. Forest Service and placed under National Park Service jurisdiction, to be jointly administered with Zion National Park. National Park designation had been dependent on the acquisition of all property within the boundaries. In the process of establishing the park, the boundaries were adjusted and enlarged from 12,920 to 35,240 acres or 55.06 square miles.⁹ The UPRR was instrumental in the promotion of Bryce Canyon from a national monument to a national park. The UPRR also wished to expedite construction of the Zion-Mount Carmel Highway (HAER No. UT-39) through Zion National Park in order to complete the tourist loop between the parks. Apparently, the NPS agreed to authorize and finance the completion of the Mount Carmel highway, including the 5,613' long tunnel (the longest in the NPS system), within two years while the railroad, in exchange, would deed the Bryce Canyon acreage owned by the corporation to the federal government. The UPRR would retain the

⁸Ibid., 61.

⁹Ibid.

concession rights at the new Bryce Canyon National Park.¹⁰ After a series of complicated negotiations, the NPS, the UPRR, and the UPC came to terms and the contract was finalized.

The large-scale plans developed by the UPRR within the national parks were generally successful, although the rise in popularity of the private automobile soon led to a decline in rail travel. The development of tourist accommodations continued at Bryce Canyon throughout the 1930s, however, funded primarily by public works programs provided to the National Park Service. Improvements, interpretive exhibits and comfort stations along the Rim Road were completed during this period. Maintaining and upgrading the road was particularly important, as Bryce Canyon Park Service personnel soon found themselves vastly outnumbered by and woefully unprepared to handle the many families arriving in their new motorcars.

Visitation to Bryce Canyon has increased every decade since 1946, placing great demands on the physical capacity of the park. Nevertheless, despite minor changes in alignment during the 1950s, few alterations along the Rim Road have occurred, leaving most of the originally planned route intact. Current plans for the park include updating and modifying the Rim Road to accommodate modern needs, increase vehicular and pedestrian safety, and improve scenic vistas and overlooks.

HISTORY OF THE STRUCTURE

Not many years after the Dave's Hollow "road" was cleared, it became apparent that a new route, following a different alignment and constructed in a modern fashion, would be necessary to manage the incredible number of visitors who wished to view the natural amphitheater of the park. In response, the U.S. Forest Service began the construction of the first graded and paved road into the Bryce Canyon area.

Working in cooperation with the State Highway Commission, the Forest Service improved the Panguitch-Tropic access road through Red Canyon, developing a spur which cut south towards the canyon rim. By 1923, a section of the road beginning at the northern park boundary and running to the SE 1/4 of Section 36 was completed. In 1927, plans were initiated to extend the improved road south another four miles towards Bryce Point, a route which had been graded but could only be traveled in fair weather at

¹⁰Scrattish, 96.

that time.¹¹

The first section of the Rim Road completed was the north entrance road, running 1.8 miles from the park boundary to the lodge. Sunrise Point, the primary area of development containing the lodge, visitor center and other services, was given priority during construction while other sections of the road were relegated to later completion dates. Although it was begun in 1923, the road did not meet the minimum standards of the Bureau of Public Roads until 1927. The specifications set forth by the federal government required that roads measure at least 18' across, have 3' shoulders on both sides, and be suitably surfaced with gravel or other paving material. A maximum grade of 6 percent was allowed.¹² The route was finally base surfaced in 1933, when W. W. Clyde and Company completed the work as part of their contract for sector 1-B2D.¹³

Construction of the remaining sectors of the Rim Road were delayed at least until 1930. It was obvious, however, that the expanded road system was required, primarily because of rapidly escalating visitor rates. In 1929, the first year visitation records were kept for Bryce Canyon, 5,200 automobiles entered the park carrying 22,000 people. By 1930, the park was attempting to handle twice as many automobiles and a 63.5 percent increase in visitors, utilizing the already inadequate road system.¹⁴ E. T. Scoyen, Superintendent of Zion, advised:

"In considering the road budget for the year 1929 I would be interested to know just what plans are being made for handling the situation in Bryce Canyon National Park. I would...like to request that every effort be made to start construction work on a road from Bryce Canyon Lodge to Bryce Point this summer."¹⁵

Compelled to complete the Rim Road, the Park Service surveyed the next sector of the route in 1930 and accepted bids on the

¹¹Ibid., 79.

¹²Ibid., 64.

¹³Ibid., 142.

¹⁴Ibid., 116.

¹⁵E. T. Scoyen, Superintendent, Zion National Park, Utah, to Stephen T. Mather, Director, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1 January 1929, Archival Collection, Record Group No. BRCA35, Folder 1, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

project, termed 1-A. Design and construction of sector 1-A was intended to comply with the Highway Standards of 1929, resulting in an 18' wide road, "surveyed, graded and finished with crushed stone."¹⁶ Award for construction of 1-A was made to the Union Construction Company, the lowest bidder, in June 1931, and a bond issued for the amount of \$135,855.70 "conditioned upon the faithful performance of the contract."¹⁷ Built as planned, the road continued an additional 10.5 miles past the lodge towards the Garfield-Kane County line. A number of spurs were planned, each leading to a scenic viewpoint on the rim of the amphitheater.

Construction on sector 1-A began on June 21, 1931 with 300 calendar days provided for its completion.¹⁸ Shortly after work on the road commenced, however, Thomas J. Allen, Jr., Superintendent of Zion and Bryce Canyon, reported that "all present surveyed lines, both in front of the Lodge and to the rear of the Lodge, are disapproved"¹⁹ by both National Park Service Director Horace Albright and President Carl Gray of the UPRR. The initial course of the roadway was considered to be too close to the Lodge area and the rim, necessitating examination of a new circuit for the road. The Utah Construction Company was required to work on other sections of 1-A while Engineer R.A. Brown of the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) completed new surveys, studying alternate approaches from the rear of the Lodge. After nearly a year of studies and discussion on the matter, a change order was issued by the BPR on 17 May 1932, modifying the course of 1-A. The new alignment ran further behind the lodge than previously planned. Changes to the route added \$5,872.58 to the cost.²⁰

The Union Construction Company continued building section 1-A,

¹⁶Scrattish, 139.

¹⁷A. E. Demaray, Acting Associate Director, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., in Memorandum to the Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 17 June 1931, Archival Collection, Record Group BRCA 35, Folder 5, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

¹⁸Scrattish, 139.

¹⁹Thomas J. Allen, Jr., Superintendent Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks, Utah, in a letter to Horace M. Albright, Director, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 6 July 1931, Administrative Archives, Record Group BRCA 35, Folder No. 5, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

²⁰Scrattish, 140.

submitting the completed work for final inspection by the superintendent of the park on 13 July 1932. The road was generally found to be adequate in terms of the contractor's responsibility, yet the superintendent noted that guardrails along the route were sited incorrectly or unnecessarily. Errors in placement were especially evident on curves, where the guardrail had been installed in alternating 16', rather than continuous, sections, presenting "an unsatisfactory appearance from a landscape point of view."²¹ Removing and reinstalling the guardrail for sector 1-A was not completed immediately, but was included as part of the contract for sector 1-B1, which was to be advertised soon after.

Construction on sector 1-B1, although surveyed in 1930, was not actually begun until 8 September 1932.²² Bids were accepted for the construction, improvement and surfacing of the route by B.J. Finch, District Engineer of the BPR.²³ Despite the difficulties encountered during the building of sector 1-A, the Union Construction Company was also awarded the contract for 1-B1 in August, with a low bid of \$56,895.20.²⁴ The contractor was to continue the Rim Road for 3.733 miles, leading from the southern end of 1-A to the Natural Bridge viewpoint on the rim. The Highway Standards of 1932 applied to this new section of road, requiring it to be constructed 6' wider than sector 1-A.²⁵

²¹P. P. Patraw, Superintendent, Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks, Utah, in a letter to the Director, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 14 July 1932, Administrative Archives, Record Group BRCA 35, Folder No. 5, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

²²"Final Estimate, Contract No. I-1P-1110, Dated Sept. 12, 1932." Administrative Archives, Record Group BRCA 35, Folder No. 4, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

²³"Standard Government Form of Invitation for Bids (Construction Contract)" issued by B. J. Finch, District Engineer, National Park Service, n.d., Ogden, Utah, Administrative Archives, Record Group No. BRCA 35, Folder 4, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

²⁴John H. Edwards, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., in a letter to The Honorable Secretary of the Treasury, 16 September 1932, Administrative Archives, Record Group No. BRCA 35, Folder 4, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

²⁵Scrattish, 140.

The National Park Service outlined a number of "Special Provisions" to be utilized in the construction of sector 1-B1, in conjunction with those listed in Specifications for Forest Road Construction, Form F.R. 50, 1932 Edition.²⁶ The 10-page document instructs that all construction along the proposed roadway was to be completed without leaving any visible scars on the landscape, including, but not limited to, trails, camps, downed timber, or excess fill materials. All temporary trails or portions of the old road utilized for the purposes of building the new route were to be obliterated. This procedure consisted of "plowing and scarifying, and leveling of the surface"²⁷ to resemble as closely as possible the original appearance of the area. All foreign materials from abandoned construction camps were to be "removed...to the satisfaction of the Park Superintendent through the Engineer."²⁸ In most cases, these procedures were to be completed at the contractor's own expense as part of the work agreement.

In addition to covering construction methods, the "Special Provisions" instructed the builder to, above all, pay "special attention...to the landscape features of the work" taking "special care...to protect natural surroundings and adjacent camp grounds."²⁹ The contractor was required to shield trees and shrubs which contributed to the appearance of the roadway from damage during blasting or burning operations. The Park Service considered the final appearance of the roadway to be critical, with all non-contributing elements removed and the surrounding landscape returned to a state which was as close as could be attained to that originally found there. Sector 1-B1 was completed by 5 June 1933, utilizing only 75% of the 150 calendar days provided, although construction work had been suspended between 1 December 1932 and 10 May 1933 due to inclement weather.³⁰ Final inspection of the completed road revealed budgetary underruns, as planned road features such as culverts

²⁶"Special Provisions," specifications for Rim Road, No. 1-B1, n.d., Administrative Archives, Record Group BRCA 35, Folder No. 4, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah, 1.

²⁷Ibid., 3.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., 2.

³⁰Ibid.

and wood guardrails had proved unnecessary and were therefore no constructed.³¹

Before all sectors of the Rim Road had been completed, an idea had surfaced to construct an additional entrance road into the park, extending from U.S. Highway 89 through the town of Alton and connecting with the Rim Road slightly north of its terminus at Rainbow Point. The proposed "Southwest Approach" would allow tourists to make a 38-mile loop trip through Bryce Canyon National Park. A survey was completed and a report issued by the Assistant Landscape Architect Harry Langley. The suggestion was not greeted favorably by Park Service personnel, who tended to "question the need for this road at all."³² In a somewhat detailed analysis of the proposal, Superintendent P.P. Patraw made this observation:

In disfavor of this project I have the following comment to offer. My experience has been that the more easily accessible a scenic point is made, the less it is appreciated and the less time is spent in viewing and enjoying it, on the average.³³

In view of the negative reception, the plan for a southwest approach into Bryce Canyon was abandoned.

The last of the four sections of the Rim Road was constructed and finished by two different contractors. W. W. Clyde and Company completed the grading and base surfacing of the nearly six-mile road from Natural Bridge to Rainbow Point by 21 September 1934.³⁴ Working under project 1-B2D, Clyde was also required to "reconstruct and base surface the Forest Service's old north entrance road" under its bid of \$115,368.80.³⁵ Sector 1-B2 was

³¹"Final Inspection Report," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Roads, 28 June 1933, District 12, Project No. 1 Section 1-B1, Administrative Archives, Record Group BRCA 35, Folder No. 4, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

³²Thomas C. Vint, Chief, Landscape Architecture Division, National Park Service Field Headquarters, San Francisco, to Albright, 19 February 1932, Administrative Archives, Records No. BRCA 35, Folder 6, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

³³Patraw to Albright, 26 February 1932, Administrative Archives, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

³⁴Scrattish, 141.

³⁵Ibid.

finally completed in September 1935, when the Reynolds-Ely Construction Company applied a bituminous surface for a low bid of \$58,475.³⁶

Roadway improvements completed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) helped enhance the visitors experience along the route of the Rim Road. Instituted as part of President Roosevelt's public works program, CCC Camp NP-3 was established at Bryce Canyon in spring 1934, one of nineteen camps in Utah alone.³⁷ The camp was constructed in the same area previously occupied by the Union Construction Company during their work on sector 1-A of the Rim Road, about three miles south of the park headquarters. By December 1934, CCC Company No. 962, having moved from Zion National Park, instituted a fully operating camp with 200 men, including mess hall, latrine, recreation building and enrollee tents.³⁸ Road related improvements during their first year at Bryce Canyon consisted of erosion control through road band sloping along section 1-B1, removal of downed timber along the roadside, and construction of a minor road leading from section 1-A to the rim of Fairyland Canyon.³⁹ After the completion of these projects, Company No. 962 removed itself to Zion for the winter, returning to Bryce the following May.

The CCC began a series of new projects after returning to Bryce in 1935, including the placement of a comfort station at near the Sunset Point overlook where it remains today. Constructed in the "rustic style" of architecture favored by the Park Service, this structure had to be relocated from a previous Forest Service campground. In addition, the old checking station, constructed in October 1929, was demolished and a new one built along the north entrance road. This structure was the first begun and completed by Bryce Canyon's CCC camp.⁴⁰

CCC work at Bryce Canyon between 1936-38 concentrated primarily on other pertinent needs of the park. During the 1936 season, the CCC focused their efforts on the control of bark beetles. Minor road related construction was also completed that year, including the grading and surfacing of parking areas at Bryce Canyon Lodge and White Man's Bench. For the next two years, the

³⁶Ibid., 41.

³⁷Ibid., 152.

³⁸Ibid., 153.

³⁹Ibid., 154.

⁴⁰Ibid., 149.

CCC completed some roadway maintenance and clean-up by removing timber and debris which had resulted from the insect control program.

The 1939 season proved to be the most productive for the CCC at Bryce Canyon. Ambitious plans were initiated, including a number of improvements to the roadway. General maintenance of the road, operation of a rock crushing plant for road surfacing, and construction of a parking area for the original Administrative Building (HS-31) were begun. The most significant projects, however, were a new entrance sign for the north boundary of the park and a "museum-overlook" at Rainbow Point, the terminus for the Rim Road.⁴¹ The "museum-overlook" was to be an interpretational center containing displays, maps and charts intended to inform and educate visitors. Both of the projects were to be designed and built in of native stone and timbers in the so-called "rustic-style."

Drawings for the new entrance sign included specifications for its construction. Native yellow pine logs "peeled and axe-cut irregularly on ends" supported a slab of seasoned redwood surrounded by a "limited amount" of native plant materials.⁴² The redwood slab was evenly textured by adzing or sand blasting and incised with letters similar to those used on signs elsewhere in the park. Full-size lettering templates were prepared on site and approved by the landscape architect prior to carving. All bolts were countersunk and finished with wood plugs, using the same materials to maintain visual consistency. The entire sign was covered with two coats of "driftwood (color) oil stain," with the lettering painted black.⁴³ Erected by 1940, the sign was replaced in May 1963 with a similarly designed rustic-style sign utilizing a stone slab and base with log supports.

No further significant roadway projects were completed in Bryce Canyon until 1956, when plans were initiated to by-pass the lodge area and realign the Rim Road. Realignment of the original road was deemed necessary due to a dramatic increase of visitors to

⁴¹Ibid., 160.

⁴²"Entrance Motif, North Entrance, Bryce Canyon National Park," Drawing No. NP:BC 2007, CCC Job No. 55, Class No. 153, Camp NP-4, 28 July 1939, recommended by Ernest Davidson, Regional landscape Architect, Office of the Chief of Maintenance, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

⁴³Ibid.

the park, causing a "distinct problem"⁴⁴ and gridlock in the area of the lodge as early as 1947. Between that time and 1956, when plans for the by-pass road were approved by National Park Service Director Conrad L. Wirth, the amount of automobile traffic per year had increased by 25,500 units per year from 48,500 in 1947 to 74,000 in 1956.⁴⁵

The lodge by-pass consisted of a 1.25-mile long stretch of road diverging from the Rim Road near the present site of the Visitor Center and re-connecting to the Rim Road at a point just south of the Bryce Canyon Lodge. The new construction would, in effect, straighten the Rim Road and allow visitors to travel directly to other areas of the park without being caught in congestion at the lodge. Funding for completion of the bypass, scheduled for September 1958, was included as one of seven major projects planned for Bryce Canyon under the Mission 66 program. Other items to be completed at the park included a new Visitor Center, an administration building, employee residences and campground facilities. The total cost of \$57,700 for the bypass was to be administered in two allotments, the first made available in May 1957 and the second to arrive shortly thereafter in July of the same year.⁴⁶

Within a few days of receipt of the first allotment of \$31,700, a gravel crusher, delivered from Zion National Park, began to process and stockpile materials for the construction.⁴⁷ Proceedings were delayed later in the month due to conflicts over the chosen by-pass road alignment and the lack of suitable culverts. By June 1957, construction resumed, resulting in a finished roadway at the end of July. Rainy weather postponed the final application of an oil mat until early September. The final landscaping and seal coat were not completed until September 1958, finishing the roadway by the date scheduled.⁴⁸ The path of the original Rim Road, resisting obliteration, can still be seen crossing the forest between the North Campground and the realigned road.

⁴⁴Scrattish, 120.

⁴⁵Ibid., 121.

⁴⁶Ibid., 143.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

DESCRIPTION

The Bryce Canyon Rim Road begins at the northern boundary of the park, 2.6 miles south of State Highway 12. The first 2.8 miles of the road, from the boundary to the Bryce Point spur, has a 23'-24' wide surface with a 3' shoulder. The remainder of the route, from the Bryce Point spur to Rainbow Point, measures just 18'-20' across with a shoulder width of 0-3'.⁴⁹ Most of the road runs along the plateau surface, composed of fine-grained and highly erodible soils. Accumulated moisture in this soil has contributed to degradation of the base and pavement of the road.

Approximately 1.2 miles (1.9 km) south of the park boundary are two entrance stations and the Visitor Center constructed during the Mission 66 program. Most tourists stop at least briefly at the center before traveling on through the park, with an average stay lasting only 2.2 hours.⁵⁰ All visitors are required to leave their trailers in the parking lot of the Visitor Center or in the nearby campgrounds, as they are not allowed further on the Rim Road.

The primary area of development within the park lies along the road within 2 miles of the Visitor Center. The Bryce Canyon Lodge, general store, nature center, laundry, and two campgrounds are sited within this region of the park. Sunrise Point and Sunset Point provide scenic overlooks of the natural amphitheater and access to trailheads for short walks into the canyon.

Initially, the road curves along the topography of the area through stands of ponderosa pine and Rocky Mountain juniper, staying clear of the rim of the amphitheater. Various spurs lead visitors within walking distance of the edge of the plateau. Past the Paria and Bryce Point spur, the road begins a straightaway through large meadows, gaining in elevation and entering the spruce-fir forests. The road then begins to curve more frequently, approaching the rim at many points. Overlooks are provided here for rest and enjoyment. Scenic vistas from the road are few, with natural growth obscuring views of the amphitheater. The road continues to a circular parking area near Rainbow Point, terminating at an elevation of 9105' near the south end of the park.⁵¹

⁴⁹Road System Evaluation, Environmental Assessment, draft, Bryce Canyon National Park (United States Department of the Interior, May 1989), 21.

⁵⁰"Monthly Public Use Report, Bryce Canyon National Park," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, December 1992.

No major construction has occurred on the Rim Road since the 1958 realignment near the lodge area, leaving the route virtually unchanged from that first constructed in the 1930s. The road surface, however, is rapidly deteriorating, particularly toward the south end of the route. The road is currently composed of a 6" compacted base consisting of 3/4" diameter or smaller rocks laid over a graded surface. The rocks, obtained from a gravel pit located south of Natural Bridge, contain crushed stone, sand and clay. Three to four inches of asphalt are laid over the base layer, compacted to a depth of 2"-3" inches. Maintenance of the road consists of cold asphalt for patching holes and an epoxy base crack sealant, applied at 400 degrees Fahrenheit, for any cracks which occur in the surface. An emulsified oil (water-based) coating is applied 1/8" in depth, finished with a 1/2-3/8" fractured chip. If the chip and seal no longer holds or cannot be used to adequately repair the road, a new coat consisting of 2" of hot asphalt may be applied over the old road surface.⁵²

An evaluation and assessment of the Rim Road drafted in May 1989 found that most of the route does not meet National Park Service minimum requirements as set forth in the *Park Road Standards*, issued in 1984. The road itself is in poor condition, with cracks, potholes and "severe edge failure."⁵³ The road width varies from 18'-24' and has little or no shoulder in some areas. In addition, unsightly cuts and fills have not been revegetated or banked properly, leaving precariously pitched rock slopes along the roadway requiring continual maintenance.

Parking areas at viewpoints and overlooks, designed in the 1930s, are inadequate for current needs. At some overlooks, particularly Natural Bridge, vehicular parking has been placed directly adjacent to the rim, impeding the scenic quality of the region and requiring visitors to back out into the roadway to exit. A few of the most heavily visited viewpoints, including Bryce Point, also have parking areas which approach the rim too closely and terminate in a dead-end. The resulting traffic congestion between incoming and outgoing cars, buses and oversize recreational vehicles at this point creates considerable havoc. In addition, poor sight approaches at overlooks and viewpoints also compromise visitor safety.

⁵¹Bryce Canyon Official Map and Guide, reprint (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989).

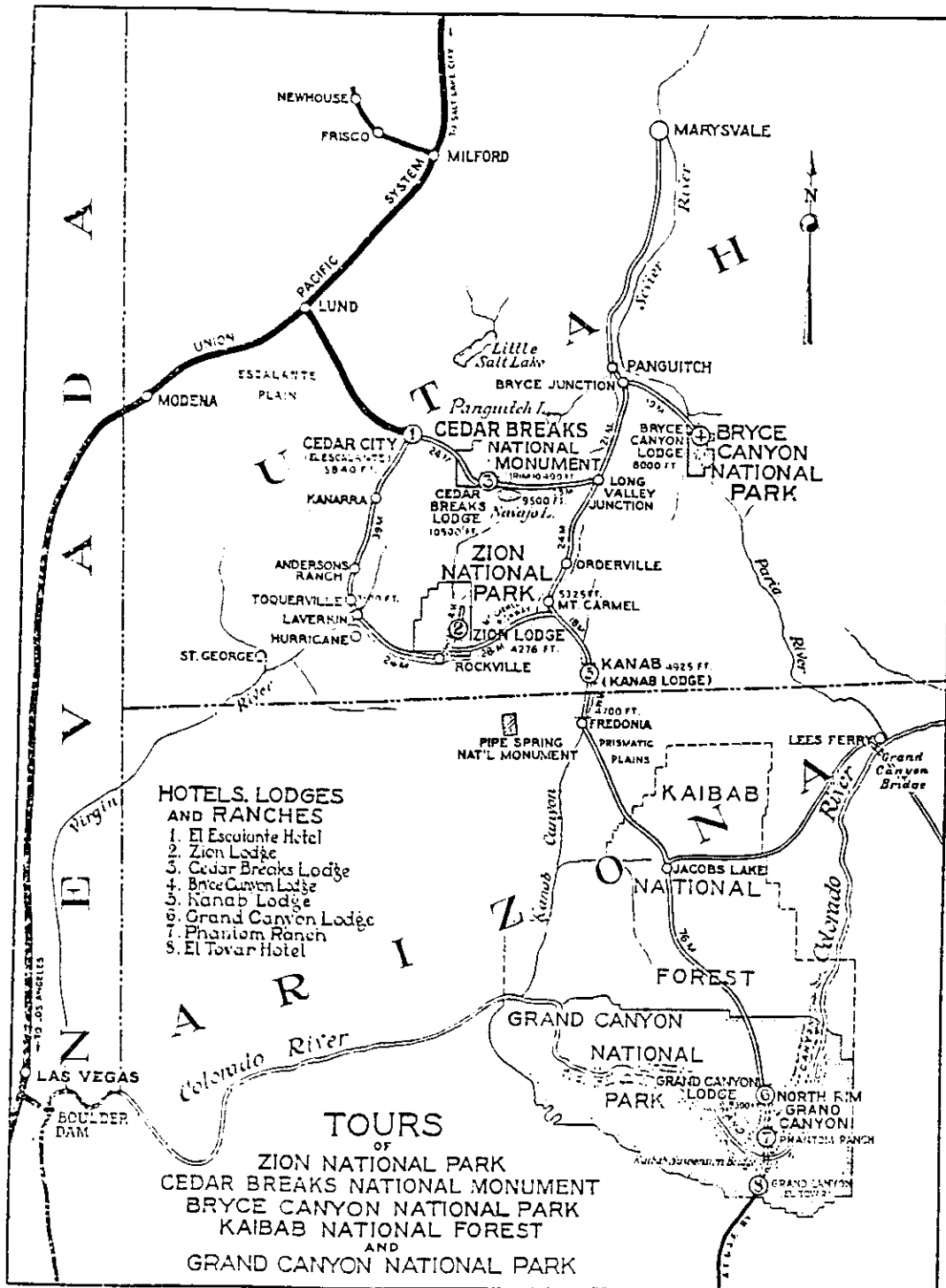
⁵²M. W. Castagnetto, Chief of Park Maintenance, telephone interview by Christine Madrid, 10 July 1993, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

⁵³Road System Evaluation Environmental Assessment, 1.

In 1994 and 1995, the Rim Road between Farview and Rainbow Point were reconstructed under contract by the Gilbert Western Corporation. Pavement width was 22' with 3' shoulders. Cut slopes and fills were flattened as much as possible to maximize vegetation. At Farview and Natural Bridge, the roadway was separated from the parking areas to improve safety.⁵⁴

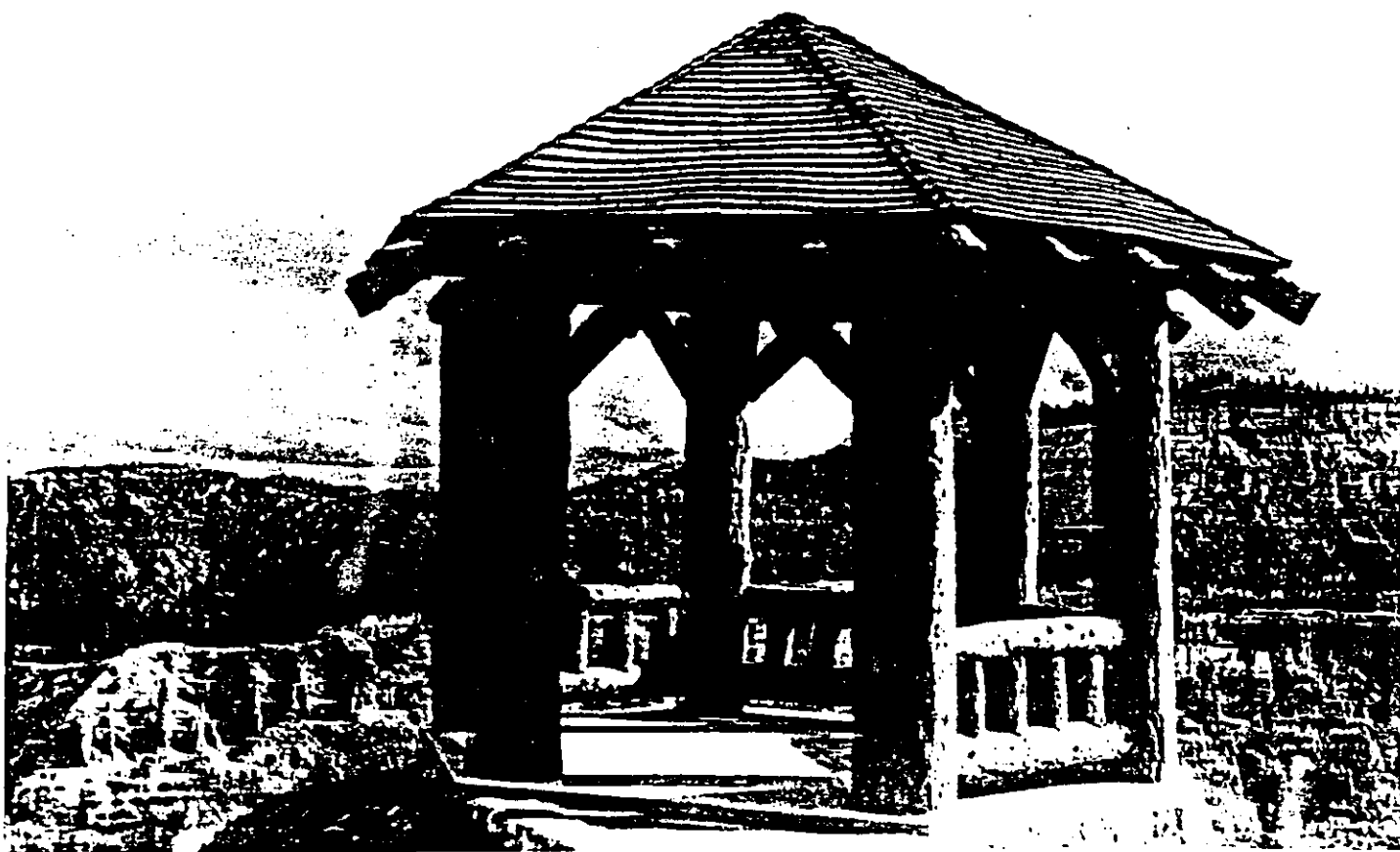
Although park facilities can never realistically be expanded enough to satisfy all visitors while maintaining the integrity of the natural setting, plans have been made by the Park Service to mitigate those problems associated with the outdated road system. Modifications include a minor realignment of the road, expansion and redesign of parking areas and pullouts, revegetation of steep and unsafe slopes, and the creation of new vista openings by the selective thinning of natural growth. The proposed changes to the Rim Road and associated features are not anticipated to significantly alter the historic integrity of the route, although the original character of the road will be compromised. It is expected, however, that alterations to the Rim Road will result in a safer, more pleasurable experience for the many visitors to the park.

⁵⁴Fred J. Fagergren, Superintendent, Bryce Canyon National Park, to Richard Quin, HAER Historian, 1 November 1995.



Union Pacific Railroad Tours
Regional Road Map, Circa 1922
Record Group 79
Records of the National Park Service
National Archives Building
Washington, D.C.
Scrattish, 70.

Scrattish, 72.



Utah Parks Company Shelter at Bryce Canyon Point
Removed 1945
Record Group 79
Records of the National Park Service
National Archives Building
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Scrattish, 94.

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ADDENDUM TO
BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK RIM ROAD
(Bryce Canyon Natinal Park Main Entrance Road)
Bryce Canyon National Park Roads and Bridges
State Highway 63 to Rainbow Point
Tropic Vicinity
Garfield County
Utah

HAER NO. UT-71

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